

The Life that Abides and Abounds

**HIS ~~~
GOSPEL OF LIFE
LOVE AND LIGHT**

*The Gospel of John
and
First Epistle of John*

By

**NORMAN B.
HARRISON**

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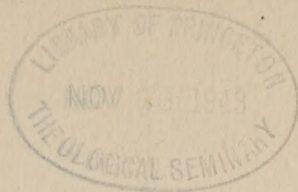
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The Gospel of John and
First Epistle of John

By

NORMAN B. HARRISON, D.D.

Pastor, Bible Teacher and Evangelist

Author of

"His Salvation as Set Forth in the Book of Romans,"

"His in a Life of Prayer," "His in Joyous
Experience," "His Sure Return,"

"His Indwelling Presence"

The Life that Abides and Abounds

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DEDICATED
TO MY BELOVED
COMPANION IN LIFE
WITH AFFECTIONATE APPRECIATION
OF THE YEARS OF DEVOTION
AND UNFAILING SYMPATHY
IN THE MINISTRY OF
THE GOSPEL

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Part One

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

THE MANIFESTATION OF LIFE, LOVE AND LIGHT

I

THE GOSPEL OF LIFE

"I came that they may have life"—John 10:10

The *Gospel of Life* would be a very fitting title for our fourth Gospel; thirty-five times the word recurs, and the thought is everywhere present, even to the saturation point; yet it is likewise the Gospel of Love and of Light. The three, in fact, are inseparable. This is so for the simple reason that they have to do with the being, nature and activity of God Himself, and God is inseparably one.

The Trinity is a mystery; so also are many things within the realm of human observation and experience. Man himself is such a mystery. Of a threefold make-up, body, soul and spirit, no thought, word or act can find expression in the sphere of one without savoring of the other two; he is a three in one and one in three.

Take electricity, for illustration. We have it and make daily practical use of it. Yet we are compelled to confess that we know not what it is. It mystifies the men who "handle" it most. However, this is evident to all: electricity manifests itself as (1) energy, (2) heat, (3) light. When our appliances seek for power, to turn the wheels of industry, they minimize the light and heat; for heat, to cook our food or fire our furnaces, they minimize the energy and light; for light, to illumine our homes and streets, they minimize the en-

ergy and heat. Yet in either one of the three the other two are present. It is impossible to have one without the others; they are inseparable.

So our Lord Jesus Christ came, He the Son, manifesting also the Father and the Spirit. His is a three-person ministry. His Gospel is Life, plus Love, plus Light.

I

The Value of Life

Life is the most valuable possession we have. Nay, it is more than a possession; it is our very self. Personality apart from life is in the very nature of things impossible. Existence hinges upon life. The dog ceases to be when life ceases. It was, but no longer is. Hence, if the life of man does not persist through death, then we ourselves cease to exist.

And for this present—what will a man give in exchange for his life? Pawn what he *is* for what he may *have*? To do so is to give up his very power to have. When he barter away his life and breathes his last he leaves it *all*, be it ten dollars or ten million. Life is the key to everything we are and have; it is our priceless possession; it is our very all.

II

The Nature of Life

What is Life? We do not know. With all our knowledge and research it remains a mystery. We experience it, but we cannot produce it or explain it. Why? Is it because God has the secret locked up

within Himself? Doubtless. When we see Him we will know life—know it in all its secrets and in all its fullness.

Jesus had much to say about life and being. He spoke of Himself as the self-existent One, the “I Am,” the One who exists independent of source, circumstance or sense of time. (God is the only being of whom this is true.) Then He gives a definition of life, life as man needs it. “This is life”—life eternal, unconditioned by time, such life as God’s is—to “know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

From this we get the thought that life is something dependent upon relation to that which imparts and sustains it. The electric lamp, for example, finds its life in relation to the power-house. The tree finds its life in relation to the soil and sunshine; the branches, in a continuous relation to the parent stem from which their very life and sustenance are drawn. The physical man finds his life in appropriating relation to food and air containing the elements essential to his existence. Then—how can we miss it?—the spiritual man finds his life in a like relationship.

All this takes us one step further back to

III

The Source of Life

Let us now read John 1:1-4. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was

not anything made that was made." (Then man must trace his being back to Him, for, as we go on to read,) "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men."

Our Life and our Light! He it was who purposed that we should be in His likeness, of an order superior to the beasts about us. The one authoritative account of our origin, the only account that explains, reads: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them" (Gen. 1:26, 27).

This it is that makes mankind in general, you and me as individuals, of a different order from the animal; He, the source of our life, "Lighteth every man, coming into the world" (John 1:9, R. V.). The margin says, "every man as he cometh into the world," as though He had guarded against our being "deficient" by personal, individual attention at the time of our coming into being. Oh, how much we owe to Him! What have we that we did not receive, even to our very life?

IV

The Need of Life

Now we are prepared to go deeper. Jesus made it plain that He looked upon men as no longer possessed of the life bestowed in creation. He declared that this fact, namely, their lack of life, was the whole point and

occasion of His coming. "I came that they may have life" (John 10:10). He reproached their unbelief, saying, "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life" (John 5:40).

These and like deliverances from the lips of Jesus make evident that His teaching and redemptive work are based upon the fact that man in his natural state is known to God as devoid of spiritual life. Let us read carefully, fitting ourselves into the picture: "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)" (Eph. 2:1-5). Here we have sin's historical inception in Genesis 3 traced to its spiritual sequence of death in all men, plus God's gracious meeting of man's need with renewed life from Himself.

Hence His declaration to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7)—born from above, a new accession of life from the Source, even God. And now He lays bare the Father's heart: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish" (as we

must in our natural, lifeless state), "but have everlasting life" (vs. 16). And John states his purpose in writing: "That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name" (John 20:31).

V

The Way of Life

Surely the Way of Life has now become plain to our minds and hearts. Jesus is Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). Consider now these words of His: "For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself" (John 5:26). Having "life in Himself," He came, lived, died, rose again, and ascended, that we might have life through Him. Today, triumphant above, He has become "a life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45).

All we need is a believing, receiving relationship. Hence we read, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36). And the simple statement of the far-reaching result is this: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). Wonderful! And simply by believing. How very wonderful!

Now go back to the first crucial statement of faith and its effect. Mark well: "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of

the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12, 13). A new start! A new birth! A new life! How? By receiving Him, who has "life in Himself," that He may impart life to us.

VI

The Needs of Life

But life has its needs, as inanimate things have not. A stick we may leave lying at our door, unheeded for days—we have done it no harm; but a plant demands attention—it is alive. Spiritual life has specific needs. These needs He is prepared to supply. He is the Life-Giver; He is also the Life-Sustainer. Not merely the "I Am," the self-existent Source of Life, in the abstract; but "I Am—the Bread, the Light, the Giver of Water (the Holy Spirit), the Way, the Door, the Vine to the branches, the Shepherd to the sheep." What are these? The things absolutely indispensable to life, to its sustenance and guidance.

Consider for a brief moment how essential to life are the things by which Jesus designates Himself. Who for a single day goes without bread, life's necessary food? Who passes a day without the benefits of light? without the refreshing of water, internally and externally? without walking a way marked out for the feet? without entering a door to the home or shelter to which it admits? Evidently, then, by such language Jesus is saying to us, "I am your All; apart from Me ye can do nothing; daily, momentarily, draw upon My supplies of Life for your every need."

The least that the follower of Christ can do, once he

has sought and claimed the supreme gift of Eternal Life at His hands, is to meet the conditions for keeping that life vitalized, with its every need met day by day. The care that we see bestowed upon the physical man should shame the careless Christian for his neglect of the spiritual man. To keep the life in a state of fullness, to maintain the life abundant, the simple secret is to "abide" in Him, thereby continuously to draw upon Him.

VII

The Many-Sidedness of Life

Life is varied. Men are variously employed. Life comes to have, in consequence, a variety of viewpoints. We look out upon life through the familiar window of our daily occupation and circumstances. We are appealed to by conceptions akin to our daily round.

Now the amazing thing about our Lord Jesus Christ is that He fits into everyone's thinking. He is kin to every man in his day by day round of duty. He is so many-sided, each can find his Christ in the mould of his own occupational life and day-by-day experience.

The following is an expansion of the I AM's of John's Gospel to include other similar designations of Scripture:

To the architect—the Chief Corner Stone (1 Pet. 2:6).

To the artist—the One Altogether Lovely (S. of S. 5:16).

To the astronomer—the Bright and Morning Star (Rev. 22:16).

To the baker—the Living Bread (John 6:51).

To the banker—the Unsearchable Riches (Eph. 3:8).

To the biologist—the Life (John 14:6).

To the botanist—the Lily of the Valley (S. of S. 2:1).

To the bride—the Bridegroom (Matt. 25:1).

To the builder—the Sure Foundation (Isa. 28:16).

To the carpenter—the Door (John 10:9).

To the doctor—the Great Physician (Matt. 8:17).

To the educator—the Great Teacher (John 3:2).

To the engineer—the New and Living Way (Heb. 10:20).

To the farmer { the Sower (Matt. 13:37).
the Grain of Wheat (John 12:24).
the Lord of Harvest (Matt. 9:38).

To the florist—the Rose of Sharon (S. of S. 2:1).

To the geologist—the Rock of Ages (Isa. 26:4, R. V.).
("It is more important to know the Rock of Ages than the age of rocks"—Bryan.)

To the horticulturist—the True Vine (John 15:1).

To the jeweler—the Precious Stone (1 Pet. 2:6).

To the jurist—the Righteous Judge (2 Tim. 4:8).

To the juror—the Faithful and True Witness (Rev. 3:14).

To the king—the King of Kings (Rev. 19:16).

To the lawyer—the Advocate (1 John 2:1).

To the lover—the Beloved (S. of S. 2:16).

To the metaphysician—the Alpha and Omega (Rev. 22:13).

To the news gatherer—the Good Tidings of Great Joy (Luke 2:10).

To the philanthropist—the Unspeakable Gift (2 Cor. 9:15).

To the philosopher—the Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24).

To the preacher—the Word of God (Rev. 19:18).

To the ruler—the Ruler of the Kings of the Earth (Rev. 1:5, R. V.).

To the sailor—the Anchor of the Soul (Heb. 6:13).

To the sculptor—the Living Stone (1 Pet. 2:4).

To the servant—the Good Master (Eph. 6:9).

To the shepherd—the Good Shepherd (John 10:11).

To the slave—the Redeemer (Gal. 3:13).

To the soldier—the Captain of Our Salvation (Heb. 2:10).

To the statesman—the Desire of All Nations (Hag. 2:7).

To the student—the Truth (John 14:6).

To the theologian—the Author and Finisher of Our Faith (Heb. 12:2).

To the traveller—the Guide (Psa. 48:14).

To the toiler—the Giver of Rest (Matt. 11:28).

To the troubled—the Comforter (John 14:18).

To the widow—the Husband (Isa. 54:5).

To the sinner—the Lamb of God (John 1:29).

To the Christian—the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 1:1).

Many-sided indeed is our Christ, commanding the attention of all. Yet our Gospel ever carries us from a mere knowledge about Him, to the need of knowing HIM, teaching us that to know HIM—Jesus Christ the sent of God—this is life eternal (John 17:3). Yea, this Gospel was written of purpose “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that

believing ye might have *life* through His name" (20: 31).

Dear reader, do not allow yourself to think that you have no need of this life. "A friend says to me, 'I have not time or room in my life for Christianity! If it were not so full! You don't know how hard I work from morning till night. When have I time, where have I room for Christianity in such a life as mine?' It is as if the engine had said it had no room for the steam. It is as if the tree had said it had no room for the sap. It is as if the ocean had said it had no room for the tide. It is as if the man had said he had no room for his soul. It is as if the life had said it had no time to live, when it is life. It is not something added to life; it is life. A man is not living without it. And for a man to say, 'I am so full in life that I have no room for life,' you see immediately to what absurdity it reduces itself" (Phillips Brooks). Without Christ you have no life. Christ came that you might have life. It is yours for the taking.

II

THE GOSPEL OF LOVE

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son"—John 3:16

"Having loved His own . . . He loved them unto the end"—John 13:1

John's Gospel is, as we saw in our previous study, the Gospel of Life, of Love, and of Light. We found that "In Him was life" and that from Him we have received life, first in creation, then in His new creation as we believed upon Him unto eternal life.

For the present study we view it as a Gospel of Love. Love is back of the Life, as the impelling power for its bestowment. Sixty times the word *love* occurs in John's Gospel. Then, to get the whole panoramic sweep of John's message, all athrob with a marvelous love, we should include a glimpse of his other writings. He who leaned upon his Lord's bosom, drank deeply of His love, delighted to designate himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved," how wondrously he has written of love. Here is a taster's sample, from the Apocalypse, the Epistle, the Gospel:

"Unto Him that loveth us" (Rev. 1:5, R. V.).

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1).

"For the Father loveth the Son" (John 5:20). "For

the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me" (John 16:27).

I

The Nature of Love

No one would think to describe or dissect love. Like the beauty and fragrance of a flower, when you have dissected it, you have spoiled it. It must be taken as it is.

We may say, however, that of the three—Life, Love and Light—Love is the most personal. It comes nearest to expressing the real person of God—"God *is* love." It is through love that we apprehend Him most intimately. Through His Life we live; through His Light we know; through His Love we abide in intimate union with Himself.

Some one has sought to separate love into two constituent elements: desire and delight. *Desire* broods over us, longs for us, woos us and claims us as its own; but only that, when so claimed, *Delight* may rejoice in us and lavish upon us its richest treasures. Such is human love at its best. Such preëminently is the love of God.

II

The Gift of Love

In the expression of its desire, love delights to give. Hence the heart of the Gospel: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." No one has ever fathomed that verse. All we can do is to contemplate its depths, as though looking into the very heart of God.

For the moment let us think of the one expression—"God so loved . . . that *He gave*" (John 3:16a). The one naturally follows the other. It is the one explanation of the Incarnation. God loved, so He gave.

What an anomalous thing it is that the people who tamper with the personality of Jesus Christ as the Son of God talk so loudly and glibly of the Love of God. Yet they are denying the one great manifestation of His love, namely, the giving of His Son to be our Saviour—"Born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them that are under the law" (Gal. 4:4, 5). If the Incarnation is not a stupendous reality, if God did not take His very own Son from His eternal glory, and "give" Him as told in the Gospel, then the world is robbed of a priceless possession, and the Gospel is rendered insipid and impotent. But if indeed He did thus give His Son, such perversions of the truth malign the love of the God of love.

III

The Rescue of Love

Now we see love to the rescue, love in its *desire*. It yearns over its object. It will not see it perish. It will pay any price for its rescue. Hence, "God so loved, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him *should not perish*."

The case is well put in Ephesians 2. Our estate as perishing ones is described in vv. 1-3: dead in trespasses and sins—separated from God—children of disobedience and therefore of wrath. But Love comes into the scene and "Love never faileth." The whole outlook

of life is altered with the next glorious statement: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love where-with He loved us" (vs. 4).

If Love's gift required the Incarnation, the full extent of the gift, going all the way to meet our case and make the rescue, required the Crucifixion. Bethlehem involved Calvary. To rescue us from perishing, He must perish, the Innocent for the guilty. So the High Priest unwittingly prophesied: "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (John 11:50).

To accomplish this purpose Love must give Himself in death. This He did, with the glorious result that we do not need to die.

"Oh, 'twas love, 'twas wondrous love,
The love of God to me.
It brought my Saviour from above,
To die on Calvary."

IV

The Bestowment of Love

"Should not perish, but *have eternal life*" (John 3:16c). Here is love *delighting*. "The Father hath given to the Son to have life in Himself" (5:26). The Son comes and gives up what He has, gives up His life that we may have it, the life that is eternal. It is Love's supreme bestowment. It could bestow nothing more.

Hence the great sin is unbelief, because it is a sin against God and His love, because it wounds Him at His heart. For God yearns to bestow eternal life upon men, if only they will let Him.

The way they let Him is by believing. The way they prevent Him is by unbelief. Our unbelief is sin against Love, against the gracious purposes of Love. It is sin against the remedy Love has brought, against the sharing of God's own nature and life which Love longs to bestow. Unbelief leaves us outside the pale of His love—leaves us without a remedy.

V

The Demand of Love

Now that Love has offered itself and its gift-bestowment of Life has been accepted, Love turns to us, and rightly, with its demands.

This brings us over into John 13. Jesus has now turned from a public ministry of appeal to men to a personal dealing with those who, through acceptance, have become His own, within the circle of His love.

We have His life, being "born again." We have His nature, Love itself. And we are His followers, those upon whom He must rely to perpetuate and propagate His life of Love. So He that "loveth us" turns to us and says: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

But He does not make this demand until He has Himself given us an exemplification of His own love, in the humility and self-forgetfulness of mind and heart and life required as love's vehicle. Let us bow our heads and hearts, His unworthy followers, as we read: "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all

things into His hands, and that He was come from God and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself" (John 13:3, 4). Then, having washed their feet, He said: "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you" (vs. 15).

But He had given us more than an example; He had given us a symbol of the power by which alone we can follow that example. The water in the vessel is the Holy Spirit in these poor vessels of ours, cleansing us from our sin, our pride and our selfishness, that we might answer the demands of His love, keeping His commandment with a real love, the one for the other.

VI

The Guarantee of Love

If Love makes its demands upon us, Love is itself the guarantee that that demand will be fully met. "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words" (John 14:23). Not force, not coercion, not regulation from without; but a quiet, all-sufficient constraint from within—the love of Christ.

Of course love works this way. The marriage altar hears the highest and holiest vows, most binding in character, but they are guaranteed fulfillment because sanctioned by an affection that will put them into practice. Go into a house of *business* and instinctively men are watching the clock as its hands draw on toward five. Their work is measured and regulated by set considerations from without; there's a limit they cannot forget. But go into a house that is a *home* and learn

the workings of love. A meal must be prepared; a garment must be mended; a child is sick or needs help. Love works on heedless of the clock—nine, ten, eleven, midnight—unconscious of time, unstinted in sacrifice, unlimited save by its own strength to endure and power to serve. “Love never faileth.”

Jesus rested His whole reliance right there. “If ye love Me, ye *will* keep My words.” No question about it. Jesus depends upon the love-bond He has woven around our hearts, uniting us to Him. Therefore our responsibility is to keep ourselves in His love. It is our one duty; all else follows.

Hence, Love being such a supreme thing, so at the heart of the Gospel, John fittingly closes with

VII

The Probing of Love

Self-reliant Peter has failed and fallen, and though graciously restored, somehow his life is not centered in his Lord. He has taken the others back with him to their fishing boats and nets.

Jesus comes out to the lakeshore and instantly, with the miracle we all recall, turns their minds and hearts again to Himself. They gather about the fire as His breakfast guests. Then He begins to probe their love. He addresses Peter. The others listen and know full well that He means them also.

It is Love that does the probing: “So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith

unto him, Feed My lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest Thou Me? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed My sheep (21:15-17).

The Love that gave Himself supremely for us is now, with full right of search, saying to us: "Is your love for Me supreme? Does it command you? Has it supplanted 'these things'? Will it suffice to separate you unto Me the rest of your life? Will it prove the fountain of an untiring service the remainder of your appointed days? Will it keep you busy, with unmeasured effort, tending My lambs, feeding My sheep?"

If this probing of love comes home to our hearts to-day, showing us how superficial our reception of His love, how niggardly our response to His love, till we are shamefaced before Him, there is a remedy. Have we ever tried it?—"the love of the Spirit" (Rom. 15:30), i. e., God coming to love in us, through His love poured into our hearts by His Spirit. It is not for us to try to love God, any more than we try to love our wives or husbands, our parents or our children. This is not what He asks of us. He has provided for our loving Him, and therefore serving Him, in and through the Spirit He has Himself given us.

What the world needs is a fresh sight of the sacrificial

love of God in Christ. It needs to see it till its heart, hardened in sin, is broken before it. Dr. Norman McLeod, the famous Scotch preacher, used to tell a touching story of a Highland mother and her boy, won by sacrificial love. She was a widow. Taking her babe she started to walk across the mountains, some ten miles, to the home of a relative. A terrible snowstorm suddenly fell upon the hills, and little by little the mother's strength failed. Next day, when men found her body, it was almost stripped of clothing. Her chilled and dying hands had wrapped her own clothing about the child, which was found in a sheltering nook, safe and sound. Years afterward the son of the minister who had conducted the mother's funeral went to Glasgow to preach a preparatory sermon. Somehow he was reminded of the story he had often heard his father tell. Instead of preaching the sermon he had prepared, he simply told the story of the Highland mother's love. A few days later he was summoned to the bed of a dying man. "You do not know me," said the man. "Although I have lived in Glasgow many years, I have never attended a church. The other day I happened to pass your door as the snow came down. I heard the singing and slipped into a back seat. There I heard the story of the widow and her son." The man paused, his voice was choking, his eyes were filling. "I am that son," he sobbed at last. "Never did I forget my mother's love, but I never saw the love of God in giving Himself for me before. God made you tell that story. My mother did not die in vain. Her prayer is answered."

III

THE GOSPEL OF LIGHT

*"I am the light of the world: he that followeth
Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have
the light of life"—John 8:12*

In our first study we saw that the Gospel of John is the Gospel of Life—remarkably so, as though that were its one message and aim. In our second study we saw it as the Gospel of Love—marvelously so, as though Love were its one throbbing theme. And now we are to see that it is equally the Gospel of Light. Twenty-five times the word occurs, while the thought is still more dominant. We cannot have Life and Love without Light, any more than we can have two of the Trinity without the third.

The dictionary defines light as "The essential condition of vision; the opposite of darkness." [It is, then, the revealer of that which we otherwise could not see; it is the enemy of darkness, which obscures and conceals.] Also, "An emanation from a light-giving body." (Light, then, requires a source.) Also, "The sensation aroused by the stimulation of the visual centers." (Light seeks to secure a response, its own purposed effect, in us.) Finally, "That form of energy which, by its action upon the organs of vision, enables them to perform their function of sight." (Light alone enables us to see and know.)

These statements make it evident that light is essential to spiritual life, that it must have its source outside of us and find its response within us.

I

The Light of Creation

The opening words of John's Gospel take us back to the eternal Son of God, back yonder in a dateless "beginning" (John 1:1, 2). He was the Creator—"all things were made by Him" (vs. 3). Not only so, but "in Him was life" (vs. 4a), and that Life, imparted and given its highest expression, became "the light of men" (vs. 4b).

Creation ends there. Man is its intended culmination and climax. That "Life," in His likeness, places us at the top, with a "light" that differentiates us from all other created existence. Life made man to share the nature of God; Light enabled him to share His knowledge and wisdom. Thus lightened, man's eyes saw, and ever see, what the animal's eyes have never seen nor ever will see. Man is akin to God.

But the next verse (vs. 5) introduces the element of "darkness"—a moral state that can not "comprehend" the light. Here, then, is the great moral and spiritual struggle between good and evil, God and the Devil, life and death, light and darkness, as anticipated and portrayed in the majestic words—of which these in John are the counterpart—with which the Genesis account opens the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light" (Gen. 1:1-3).

II

The Light of Christ's Coming

As God spake in the beginning, dispelling darkness with light; so in the fullness of time God spake with His appointed "Word"—the living Word, His very Self, incarnate, sent among us as "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," to penetrate our spiritual darkness and bring back to us the light with which He had originally blessed us. Yea, the first light of creation with the added light of re-creation.

This is the story of John 1:6-14. Whatever other lights God sent us—all the prophets and now John, the forerunner and immediate witness to the Light—here is the "true Light which lighteth every man" (vs. 9). Yet man's hopeless, helpless state in darkness is shown by the fact that "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not" (vs. 10).

How much man needed Christ! Note the next verse: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (vs. 11). They were in such blinding moral darkness that they did not know the Light when it came. They would not have Him. And men today are in that same condition, unaltered. Their rejection of God's Light is the strongest proof we have of man's moral obliquity, darkness and death. Every day that man lives in continued refusal of the Light he is proving God's portrait of him, in a ruined estate, all too true.

But when men do receive Him—what? They get back the “light of life.” They have Him, and He is the “Light of Life.” Please read what happens as though for the first time: “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (vv. 12, 13).

Now we see! See what we had not the power of perception to see before! We see, through the Incarnate Son, the glory of God. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (vs. 14).

III

The Light of Conviction

With chapter 3 we find Jesus stressing the need of the New Birth. We hear Him say to Nicodemus: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God . . . Ye must be born again” (vv. 3, 7). And this necessity is enforced by the declaration that for this purpose God in His love gave His Son and sent Him into the world, “that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (vs. 16).

Men, however, do not acknowledge their need of a New Birth; therefore they do not feel their need of Christ. So, while “God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world,” but rather that it might be saved (vs. 17), the practical result is condemnation,

self-induced by their attitude of rejection. The Holy Spirit has taken great pains to make this doubly plain. Let us note carefully as we read:

“He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (vv. 18-21).

The paramount need of today is that this very Light of Conviction break in upon men’s souls. The fact that they need Christ, plus the further fact that they refuse to take Him as Saviour, is *prima facie* evidence that they stand convicted and condemned.

IV

The Light of Conversion

It is this light of which Jesus speaks in John 8:12, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” The light of creation was a bestowment of His life—“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). The light of the new creation—redemption—is a new bestowment of His life. It is “the light of life”; life from the dead, from a state of spiritual darkness and inability to know spiritual things.

This teaching of chapter 8 is given vivid illustration in chapter 9, when Jesus opens the eyes of the man "born blind." His first birth left him in darkness. Jesus brought to his eyes and to his soul the light of a new birth.

Today we have the spectacle of men who are spiritually blind discussing and judging spiritual things. College professors, scientists, once-born men, not acknowledging that they, equally with other men, were "born blind," are breaking into the realm of the spiritual and talking about things as much beyond them in their natural state as politics and finances are beyond a dog. The dog cannot know these things because they are above and beyond his sphere of perception. Just so are spiritual things to men until they receive their "second sight"—the light of life. (Read Paul's reasoning in point—1 Cor. 2:11-16.)

The noise that these men are making in their blindness reminds us very much of an incident related to us by an officer of our Church. It was a personal experience of his boyhood days. Of it he says:

"Bathing one morning at a seaside resort at the entrance to Belfast Lough, known as Donaghadee, a group of us were about to dive off the harbour when we noticed a bank of fog about 200 yards long moving slowly past the harbour and going up the Lough in the direction of Belfast. As I remember it today, it would have reminded one of the shape of a giant dirigible. The sky was clear all around. While we were watching it, the Liverpool cross-channel steamer hove in sight on its way up to Belfast. As soon as it entered the fog

it began blowing the foghorn and slowing down to the same rate of speed that the bank of fog was going. It was a remarkable sight. We watched for fully half an hour and the steamer failed to come out of the fog in all that time. However, had the steamer been going at a greater speed than the fog she would have passed through it in less than five minutes."

These men, surrounding themselves with the mists and fog of doubt and unbelief, often willful in its nature, are not only crying loudly with their foghorns that they cannot see, but are brazenly denying to others the right to affirm the reality of that which we (once in their state but now declaring with the born-blind man, "Whereas I *was* blind, *now* I see") know by our recovery of spiritual sight to be a glorious reality.

When we were resident in Alaska we had a striking illustration of the fact that what men need is not new truth or evidence so much as the ability to see the truth. Their difficulty lies with themselves. They need an ability to see that comes only with conversion, the result of an "inner light," wrought by the regeneration of God's Holy Spirit.

The town of Skagway is surrounded by mountains. One is known as Face Mountain because it is surmounted by the face of a man. The features are in such clear, bold relief against the sky-line that tourists note it at once without the slightest difficulty. One beautiful day we met a long-time resident and remarked on how clearly the face, blanketed with snow, stood out that afternoon. He replied, "In all these years I have never been able to see the face they talk about." We said,

"What! You can't see the face? Why man, look with me." And with our finger we traced the forehead, nose, lips, chin, until he cried, "Why yes, now I see it; now I see."

It had been there these thousands of years; all he needed was the ability to see it. That is all you need, my friend, to see God in the face of Jesus Christ. Once seeing, you will know.

V

The Light of Communion

Following conversion, in the possession of His life and nature we are capable of communion with Him as was not before possible. Into this communion of life Jesus leads us in the intimate teachings of John 15: "I am the vine, ye are the branches . . . Abide in Me, and I in you."

It is a life lighted by His own immediate presence. A life in which He bestows His own Spirit upon us, promising that "He, the Spirit of truth, will guide us into all truth" (John 16:13). Thus He precludes the possibility of His follower coming under the darkening shadow of uncertainty, if only he will live in this provision of union and communion: "He . . . *will* guide you." And as though this were not enough, lest we think ourselves at any time left to our own resources, this life provides for direct access to Him through prayer. And it is prayer to Him at the right hand of the Father, the place of "all power." "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (vs. 24).

VI

The Light of Consecration

The Light wrought in us, by communion with Christ, now becomes the Light shining out from us, by consecration to Christ. It is the step by which Sanctification merges into Service.

This complementary truth is found in John 15. Often we fail to recognize that the Vine and Branch teaching harks back to the imagery of the candlestick in the Tabernacle. The candlestick was designed with "branches" proceeding from the central stem or "vine," each branch carrying the representation of "fruit" upon it. The oil, the Holy Spirit, flowing through the branch, produced the fruit in the form of light. Thus it is we are to abide in Him, yield to Him, draw upon Him, that He may bear His own fruit, that is, show forth His own light, through us.

Brought to the service side of the truth we are now studying, how forcefully we are reminded that light is not for ourselves but for others. It lightens us only that through us it may lighten those about us. Busy bringing light to others, Jesus said, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:5). These words, "as long as," anticipate the creating of new light centers, when, having gone hence and having planted His Spirit in our hearts, He could say of us, His candlesticks, "Ye are the light of the world."

Tracing this teaching on into the Epistles, where the appeal is based upon the fact of His abiding, candlestick relationship, believers find themselves pictured as

being "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life" (Phil. 2:15b, 16a). Every believer should adopt as his life-motto the words, so beautifully suggestive, inscribed upon the famous Eddystone Lighthouse, on the coast of England: "To give light and to save life." Our Lord's call to consecration, enforced by conditions of darkness about us, makes this our imperative duty.

VII

The Light of Christ's Coming Again

It is most graciously significant that the Gospel narrative of our Lord's days in the flesh is not suffered to close without causing to shine upon the pathway of His followers the light of the promise that He will come again. In that dark hour when the Cross was casting its shadow across the heart of Christ and His chosen company, begetting fears and forebodings—in that hour of gathering gloom Jesus reassured them with the prospect of a glory He was going before to get ready, only that He might return and receive them into it, a promise and prospect that was to become the pole-star of the Church's hope through the years, often long and weary, of the Saviour's absence. Then, as always since, those wondrous words dispelled the shadows from their hearts. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive

you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

And now the Gospel concludes with this light focused upon the heart and pathway of one individual disciple. Peter, having received the revelation of his prospective martyrdom, asked the Lord as to John's future. The reply burned itself into John's consciousness: "If I will that he tarry till I come" (read John 21:22, 23). Through intervening years the now venerable Apostle (90 A.D.) had walked in that light, buoyed by the realization that the Lord Himself had intimated the possibility of His return within his very life-time. And when exile for Christ's sake befell him, there on Patmos he saw His coming in glorious vision and the comforting reality of it broke as a sunburst of glory in his soul! Just so for every child of God today; however dark the outlook of earthly circumstance, it is his privilege to walk facing the fadeless light of the Coming One and of the New Creation about to be wherein dwelleth righteousness and peace.

How does our heart respond to our Lord's promise? Are we living daily in its pulse-quickenning prospect? Does its light glorify the day-by-day round of drudgery?

Hoeing Cotton

There's a King and Captain high
Who is coming by and by,
And He'll find me hoeing cotton when
He comes!
You can hear His legions charging,
In the regions of the sky,
And He'll find me hoeing cotton when
He comes!

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

When He comes! When He comes!
All the dead shall rise in answer to
 His drums;
And the fires of His encampment star
The firmament on high,
And the heavens shall roll asunder when
 He comes!

There's the Man they thrust aside,
Who was tortured till He died,
And He'll find me hoeing cotton when
 He comes!
He was hated and rejected,
He was scorned and crucified,
And He'll find me hoeing cotton when
 He comes!

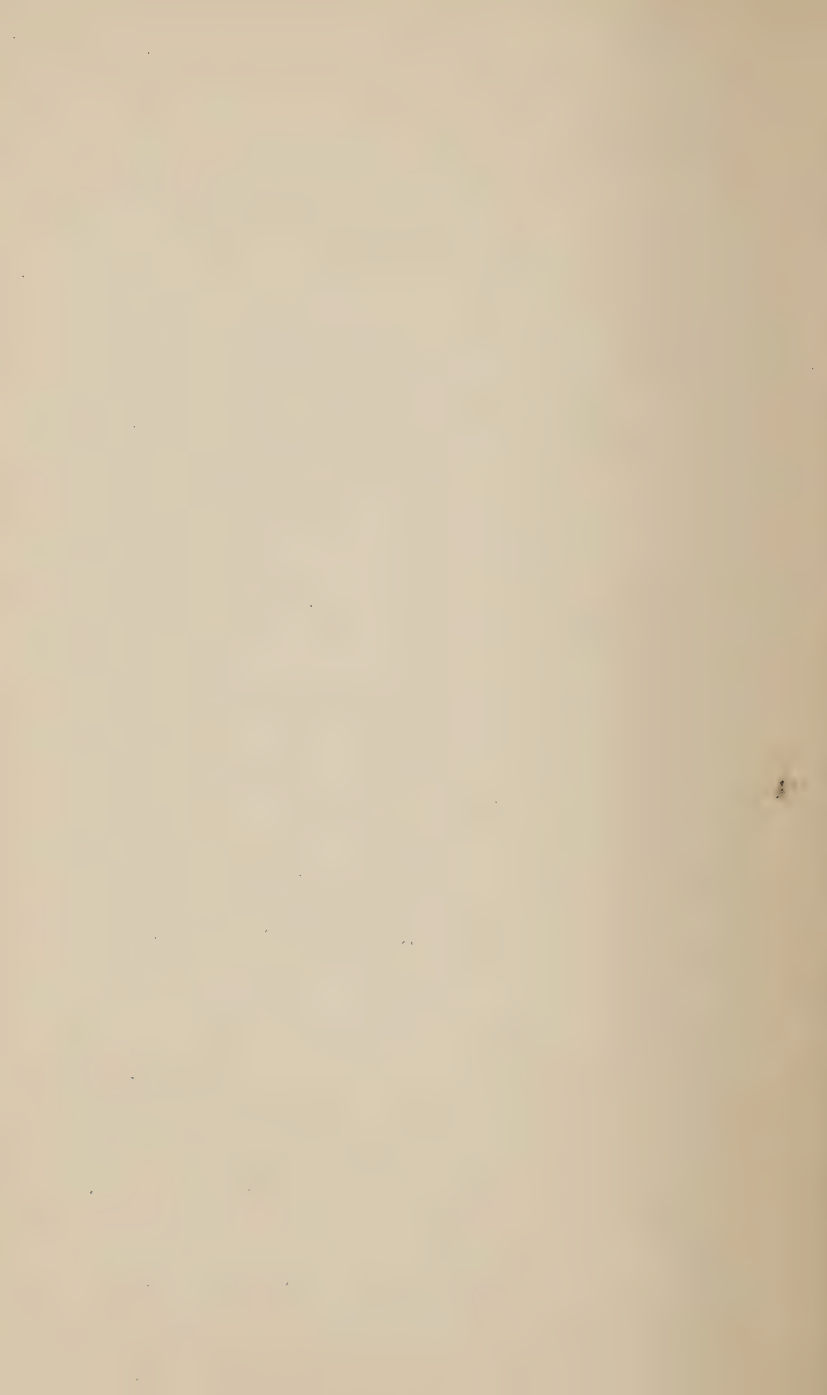
When He comes! When He comes!
He'll be crowned by saints and angels when
 He comes;
They'll be shouting out "Hosannah!"
To the Man that men denied,
And I'll kneel among my cotton when
 He comes!

Shadwell, from a Negro Song

Part Two

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE, LOVE AND LIGHT



I

THE ABIDING LIFE

"And now, little children, abide in Him"—

1 John 2:28

Between the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John there is the closest possible relationship. The latter supplements the former. Of this intent we are made at once aware as we turn from the opening words of the one to those of the other:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. . . . And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace, and truth" (John 1:1, 4, 14).

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us)" (1 John 1:1, 2).

Moreover, as we peruse the pages of the Epistle, so brief in extent, so majestic in thought, yet so strangely simple in the language that conveys it, we meet with the same three dominant and recurrent words that characterize the Gospel: Life, Light, Love. Evidently

here also we are dealing with the three simple, primal, irreducible elements by which Deity has manifested Himself to men.

But more, interwoven with the above is another set of words that stand out upon these pages signifying an advance upon the Gospel view of Light, Love and Life.* They are: Fellowship, Know, Witness. These are expressions of experience. When Light, Love and Life are permitted to do their work; when they are appropriated and assimilated; when they really register in the heart and are given their wonted response in the life, they bring about a fellowship with God and with all others of like experience; they produce an assurance, a certainty that rests upon proven reality; they beget a witness within and without that spells victory for this life and the life that is to be.

Still more; there is one other word pervading all the pages of this Epistle, serving as the binder between these two sets of words. It is the little word "abide." (Its presence is partly obscured by being rendered at times in the Authorized Version, *dwell, continue, remain.*) It occurs some twenty-three times. It is this word that marks and makes possible the advance of the Epistle over the Gospel. It is the key to Christian experience, by which the divine attributes are trans-

* The sequence of these words is somewhat inconsequential. However, there is reason for the order most natural to the Gospel not holding for the Epistle. In the Gospel, Life is first manifested; then the Love that prompted its giving; then the Light that results from its coming. In the Epistle, however, the possession of the Life is presupposed. All Christian experience is dependent upon the possession of Life: its development leads into the Light of Life; then the Love of Life; resulting in the fullness of Life itself.

planted into human soil to the transforming of character and conduct.

What, may we ask, has intervened since the life, death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord that imparts to the Apostle's Epistle a viewpoint so definitely in advance over that taken in his Gospel, yet so closely related to it? The answer is, Pentecost. On that day the prophetic feast of centuries was fulfilled. The promised gift of the Holy Spirit was given, sent from the presence of the Father by the glorified Christ (Acts 2:33). By His coming the Body of Christ was formed and believers were baptized into it. Since then, through the centuries, the Father's immediate response to the believer's faith in His Son is the bestowment of His Holy Spirit, thereby building him into this already formed, mystical Body.

This is the Abiding Life, the bringing to realization in experience of the blessed truths taught by our Lord Jesus Christ in the upper room, as recorded by John in his Gospel, chapters 14-17. Nor is it the privileged experience of the few. It is the life into which, however undeveloped or unworthily lived, He has brought all believers by a common bestowment. That all may enter into its blessedness, as a possession whose wealth is priceless, such is the purpose of this post-Pentecost supplement of the Gospel. As Jesus taught, so has Pentecost wrought.

1—THE POSITION OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST. Grafted into the Vine we are henceforth identified with Him in a union of nature and a communion of life. As we "abide" in Him, He abides in us; the knitting of na-

tures becomes actual, the flow of life continual and effectual. As the branch is nothing and therefore can "do nothing" apart from, severed from the vine, so is the believer in Christ.

2—THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF THE SPIRIT. Given to us to "abide," He is the secret of the Abiding Life. By Him it is made possible. By His incoming the union with Christ was effected. By His indwelling the communion of life is carried on. He is the "sap," and by its lifeflow the branch takes on a likeness to the Vine, an inward, unobtrusive, transforming process.

3—THE PRACTICAL OUTPUT IN FRUIT-BEARING. "Herein," says Jesus, "is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit." Thus the entire Trinity is involved in the Abiding Life, just what we would expect from the fact that it is a triune experience, both in appropriation and expression, of Light, Love and Life. Nor must we fail to note some of the specified forms of fruit-bearing: love for one another; joy to the full; an emboldened prayer-life; a conformity to His commandment (John 15:7-14).

As the tree is known to us by the flavor of the fruit we gather from its branches, so is Christ made manifest to the world today; it is by the ministration of His own life and nature through us, so abiding in Him that He flavors all we are and do. How utterly the world needs it! How utterly He depends upon us for it!

II

A FELLOWSHIP—THREEFOLD AND THREE-TENSE

*"That ye also may have fellowship with us"—
1 John 1:3*

The first word in this Epistle designed to bring that which Jesus manifested in His earthly life over into Christian experience, to be experimentally known and proved through the living out of the Abiding Life, is "fellowship." It is meant to be:

I

A Fellowship in Light, Love and Life

It is John who, with the utmost simplicity and directness, gives us three irreducible statements of the being and nature of God: "God is Light" (1 John 1:5); "God is Love" (1 John 4:8); "God is Spirit" (John 4:24).

Here, then, we are handed the key to this remarkable Epistle, so simple and fundamental in its truths as almost to forbid analysis. Dividing at the beginning of chapter three, (1) "God is Light" determines the truth and teaching, the life, character and conduct of the first half. (2) "God is Love" in like manner dominates the second half. (3) "God is Spirit," Life in the absolute, therefore communicable, as in creation and again in re-creation, this is the pervasive element of the entire Epistle, that without which no other experience of God

were possible, for if God were incapable of communicating Life, He could by no means communicate Light or Love.

This, then, bears out what we have previously noted that Life, the Abiding Life, is the "binder" of Light and Love, rendering the three inseparable in manifestation and experience (Gospel and Epistle) as they are, and ever must be, in God the Eternal.

1—A FELLOWSHIP. And what a fellowship it is! The word, in the Greek, means a "having in common." A communion of possession and interest that results from a "communicating." How suggestive! It pictures precisely what is made possible by the Abiding Life, the communicating of life and nature from vine to branch, resulting in a community of possession, operation and expression.

2—A FRIENDSHIP. This is a word that greatly enriches for us the meaning of fellowship. In this same Vine-and-Branch chapter, after referring to the fruit from this union, Jesus says, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15). Here is the inwardness of friendship, the readiness and desire not to withhold but to share with the other all that we know, have and are. Jesus has taken us into friendship. And now, from the glory, He has nothing to withhold—all that He is He communicates. In His friendship we have fellowship of the highest sort.

3—A COMPANIONSHIP. The word is of Latin deriva-

tion, meaning to "break bread together." This, in oriental custom, only friends do. And the doing of it affords to friendship its desired opportunity for fellowship. This longing is in the heart of our glorified Lord; "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Rev. 3:20). What a privilege to have Christ within, in the intimate fellowship of "table talk," communicating to us without reserve what He thinks, is, and has for us.

II

A Fellowship, Past, Present and Future

What a range His fellowship covers. For He is a three-tense being, who "is, was, and is to come." He says of Himself: "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen" (Rev. 1:18). When in the Holy Spirit we are baptized into such as He we are baptized into a three-tense experience of Him:

1—MANIFESTED IN THE PAST, on earth, in the flesh, for our salvation (1 John 1:1-3). At no time can we fail to root our Christian experience in His incarnation, life, death and resurrection. Paul, in his yearning for the best and truest fellowship, goes back to this: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (Phil. 3:10).

2—MANIFESTED IN THE PRESENT, in heaven, for us and for our sanctification. He is there as our "Advocate with the Father" (1 John 2:1, 2). And now He has fel-

lowship with us by and through His Holy Spirit, that other Advocate, or Comforter (the same Greek word), sent to be "with us" (John 14:16). Note that He does not call the Spirit "an" Advocate, as though His was the only ministry of this sort, but "another" Advocate, lawyer, counsellor, one who cares for our case and meets our spiritual needs, He to "abide with us" while our Lord Jesus Christ carries on His advocacy for us "with the Father." One there, another here, "that we may not sin," that this barrier to our fellowship with Him, our Holy God, may be kept from coming in between.

3—MANIFESTED IN THE FUTURE, He will be, to the loving, welcoming gaze of His children. While we are already the children of God, in the blessed fellowship of the divine family that is ever the thought of this Epistle, yet it reaches on with expectation into the more glorious future: "It is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is" (1 John 3:2, R. V.). And future though this manifestation in His likeness be, the ministry of "hope" makes it a present, transforming factor in our fellowship: "And every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:3, R. V.). Thus is secured a present kinship of purity that promotes and makes more possible the communication of Himself in His perfecting Light, Love and Life. It is ever presented thus in Scripture, called the "blessed hope," for He uses it to bless even now in bringing us into closer fellowship with, and likeness to Himself.

III

A Fellowship Godward, Selfward, Brotherward

He who would read aright this Epistle and gather from its teachings that which will turn to his personal, spiritual profit, must:

1—KEEP THE WINDOWS OF HIS SOUL OPEN GODWARD, as the source of all spiritual life and blessing. "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Therefore we are exhorted to "have fellowship with Him," to "abide in Him," to live in such a manner that we may "know Him," to refuse everything, be it of the world, the flesh, or false doctrine, that militates against the vitality of the bond between us.

2—LET THE TRUTH HAVE ITS DESIRED AND WONTED EFFECT SELFWARD, as the vessel God has chosen into which to pour His truth, yea Himself. Confessedly such a vessel must be clean. Fellowship with unsullied Light, with unadulterated Love, with unspotted Life—such a fellowship cannot leave the heart and life unclean. At once comes a consciousness of sin. We are pained at the disparity between our walk and His. We are ashamed to receive His love in our hearts and there, with it, harbor hatred.

3—LET THIS HEAVENLY FELLOWSHIP FLOW OUT FROM HIM BROTHERWARD. God has constituted us a family, a redeemed brotherhood, to demonstrate the family characteristics, received from the Father, in our conduct the one toward the other. That which we receive in fellowship with Him we are to pass on through a like

true fellowship with them. Having our window open heavenward to bask in the sunshine of His love, we must hold our door open earthward, that others may feel the warmth and reality of that love, not in word and with the tongue but in such ministry as may be required.

Called to such a fellowship, its contemplation must lead to an abandon in which our blessed Lord takes the ascendancy over every possible interest of life.

Long years were spent for me
In weariness and woe,
That through eternity
Thy glory I might know.
Long years were spent for me!
Have I spent one for Thee?

Oh, let my life be given,
My years for Thee be spent;
World-fetters all be riven,
And joy with suffering blent:
To Thee my all I bring,
My Saviour and my King.

—*Frances Ridley Havergal*

III

THE TEST OF A TRUE EXPERIENCE

*"He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked"—
1 John 2:6*

Utterly repugnant to the Apostle is the sham and pretense of mere profession. How futile to declare one's self in intimate communication with Light and Love if the life remains devoid of the qualities inseparably associated with Light and Love. So the Epistle proceeds at once to probe the life, using tests to which every believer must submit himself, tests that distinguish the genuine from the false. They reach finality in the words: "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2:6).

I

"He That Saith"

We are taken at our word; then a search is instituted for that which should be our experience in consequence. Read thoughtfully 1 John 1:6-2:6: "If we say . . ." (1:6), testing our falsity; "But if we walk . . ." (1:7), glorying in the genuine. "If we say . . ." (1:8), probing the self-deception; "If we confess . . ." (1:9), pointing the way to a true experience. "If we say . . ." (1:10), making doubly clear to us our sham and our sin in all its seriousness. "He that saith . . ." (2:4),

putting us again in the "liar" class; "But whoso keepeth . . ." (2:5), rejoicing in the love of God genuinely evidenced. "He that saith . . ." (2:6), the final summing up of the entire probing process. In it our professed fellowship with Him who is Light and Love is put to practical test: Is that Light and Love manifested in our daily walk?

II

"Even as He Walked"

If we say that we are abiding in Him, His life, flowing into us and actuating us, should find a like expression in our way of living as it did in His. His walk, then, becomes the standard by which to gauge our walk. But how shall we set about conforming our walk, or manner of life, to His? Shall we single out certain of its circumstances and press ours into their mould? Ah, no, nothing so artificial! Nothing by way of imitation! It is the inwardness of His life, its controlling principles and passions, evidenced in His walk before men, that must constitute the norm of the believer's walk.

How, then, did He walk? John, in his Gospel, comprehends the wonders of that matchless walk as a manifestation of Light, Love and Life.

1—HE WALKED IN LIGHT. The light of His Father's presence, claimed by constant communion with Him and by a life in all things pleasing to Him; the light of His Father's favor, calling forth the commendation, "My Son, in whom I am well-pleased"; the light of complete identification with Him, so that He could say,

“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,” and continue by tracing His words and works back to the Father as their source: “The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works” (John 14:10). He so walked in the light of His Father’s face that when, on the cross, it must of necessity be withdrawn from Him, the experience was one of utter darkness and dismay to Him. He so walked that He was “the light of the world” and could invite others to follow Him with the assurance that they would “not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

2—HE WALKED IN LOVE. Oh, how He loved. In the world to convey and demonstrate the love that “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,” our Lord “went about doing good,” ministering to the needs of men, showing God’s love to be kind and compassionate. Under test His love never failed; it went on loving. He not only loved His own to the end, but His enemies as well. Reviled, He reviled not again, but commended God’s love in pouring out His life for men who hated Him with cruel, malicious hatred. What a standard for His followers: “Love one another as I have loved you”!

3—HE WALKED IN LIFE; that is, in the things that make for life rather than death, that conserve to life its truest character and enable it to give itself in blessing to others. Not only did our Lord not waste His life in any unworthy purpose, but He did not vitiate it by deviating from the pole-star of a divine purpose. His walk was the constant expression of a life-purpose: to

do His Father's will and finish His work, declaring that this was His very meat and drink; to walk in sinlessness, a purpose that necessitated His keeping Himself unspotted from the world, that thus He might have a sinless life to offer up for us (cf. John 6:38; 7:7; 8:46).

III

"Ought Himself Also So to Walk"

There is no mistaking this language. It is the Apostle's practical appeal in his Epistle by which He presses home to all believers the Pattern-life portrayed in his Gospel. We are "so to walk." Yet, Pentecost having come, the Lord Jesus Christ is more than a pattern, and must be if we are to walk as He walked. The secret must be inward.

1—THE POSSIBILITY lies in the fact that we are members of His Body. Given the control of His body, now as then, dwelling in us He will "walk in us." So, as we "abide in Him," He and we do the walking. It "ought" to be the same.

2—THE RESPONSIBILITY for so walking lies in this, that we are the manifestation of our glorified Lord for our present day. Only as we so walk can we rightly represent Him with whom we are inseparably identified, both inwardly, in the gift of His Spirit, and outwardly, in the thought of the world. In the light of the facts this responsibility is inescapable; this divine "ought" can never be removed.

3—THE NECESSITY for "so" walking lies hidden in the little word "also." "Ought himself also." How John delights thus to couple us with Him. In the pre-

cious 14th chapter of his Gospel, recording Jesus' teaching, are five "alsos," each time linking the believer with Christ in a relationship that suggests incompleteness but for the act or fact so set forth. Its use has the same force here in the Epistle. Consider the case. Christ having finished His earthly walk, God the Father lifted Him to glory and "gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22, 23). As the head is not complete without the body, so is Christ incomplete without us. As He began His walk in the body of His flesh, so He must rely upon us, His present body, for continuing and completing that walk. His former walk is on record. Men read it and wonder. But it is remote, and doubtless He was a marvel-man. They are not convinced except as they see a corresponding walk in His followers. Upon this the faith of men waits. They must see that we "also so walk."

On exhibition in Washington, D. C., is a certain copy of the Declaration of Independence. At first sight the penmanship appears much like that of any other copy. But one has only to stand in a particular position to detect the features of George Washington, the man who made the Declaration a practical reality. In its writing he is made to live again. Just so with every one who "says," makes the declaration, that he has been set free from his past, only that he might enter into fellowship with the One who procured his freedom. The man who declares he is abiding in Him, that man's living and walking "ought" to disclose the fact to neighbors and friends in an unmistakable likeness to Him.

IV

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

*"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another"—
1 John 1:7*

Every privileged relationship of life carries with it a correspondent responsibility of opportunity. Yet our Christian privilege is such as to minister an abounding grace of power for the discharge of every Christian duty. As no warrior wars at his own charges, neither does the Christian walk in reliance upon his own resources. He is but putting the Abiding Life into practice. He is bringing to expression the secret resources of a redeemed soul. He is demonstrating what it means to be brought out of darkness into His marvelous light. He is qualified for being and doing what is incumbent upon all believers. "For," says Paul, "ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8, R. V.).

I

Light at Its Source

To know light, and therefore what it means to be in fellowship with light, we must trace it back to its source. As the swift-winged sunbeam that kisses our cheek, when passed through the spectrum, yields up the qualities of the energizing sun from which it emanated,

just so is all spiritual light. "God is Light." And again, "In Thy light shall we see light." In God is light in the absolute, such light as, coming from God, makes known to men His being and nature.

1—LIGHT IS PURE. It suffers no admixture of anything foreign to it. It is incapable of adulteration or contamination. Nothing extraneous can by any possibility attach itself to it. What a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ manifesting the purity of Deity in His walk among men. Touching the unclean, He was not defiled. Passing through the haunts of sin and iniquity, in sympathetic contact with the shame and sorrow of human life, He emerged sinless and stainless. What a portrayal, as well, of the purity that must ever attach to and characterize the life that partakes of the divine nature.

2—LIGHT IS PERVASIVE. It enters the least opening accessible to it. It searches out the recesses that otherwise would remain dark, dank and dismal. It penetrates the gloom, leaving it no alternative but to flee before its presence. Science long since disclosed the value of this pervasive quality of light in laying hold of every lurking germ of disease, whether in the homes of men or in the human system. Such is the ministry of Him who came as the world's Light. So far from sin fastening upon Him, it could not even stand in His presence. How often men found themselves confronted with the penetration of His searching insight, only to yield up the sinful unworthiness of their thoughts and actions.

3—LIGHT IS POWERFUL, with a power that is pecu-

liarily its own. No agency known to man travels so swiftly or so far, yet does its work so silently and unobtrusively. From the farthest stellar spaces it reaches to us, revealing yonder worlds upon worlds. From our sun it bears upon its beams a multiform ministry for the sustaining of life and the maintaining of industry. The power put forth in a single day is wholly beyond compute. Yet all is done noiselessly—there is no sound; and gently—there is no jar, but a quiet persistent putting forth of its powers to heal and help.

All of this, and so much more, is our wonderful Light, in whom is “no darkness at all,” and with whom He has brought us into fellowship, to a privileged sharing of these qualities with Himself.

II

Light in Us

He who said, “I am the Light of the world,” turned to His followers with a declaration startling in its directness: “Ye are the light of the world.” For this inescapable commission to lighten a benighted world we shall qualify only as we “walk in the light,” that is, in abiding union with the Light, permitting Him to impart His qualities to us. Doing its wonted work in us:

1—LIGHT REVEALS. It is the Psalmist who says, “In Thy light shall we see light.” Our darkness is doubly caused: absence of light and loss of sight. This latter lack is made up to us, restored in the New Birth. The former is remedied by the Abiding Life, the continual communicating presence of the Spirit, linking us with

the source of all light, even with Him in whom is no darkness. Is it strange that such an association should bring to light a foul brood, hiding in the heart, whose presence we had failed to suspect hitherto? It required the Light to reveal them. But a continued disavowal of their presence, in a claiming of sinlessness in either nature or action (1 John 1:8, 10) belies the reality of the relationship we profess. On the other hand, sensitiveness to sin is the sign of His illuminating, self-revealing presence. Hence it is that some of the most godly saints, walking daily in a closeness of fellowship with Him, have been characterized by a confessed consciousness of sin beyond their fellows. They were living in the Light that made evident the contrast between themselves and Himself.

This experience finds divine interpretation in the spiritual autobiography of the prophet Isaiah. It was when he "saw the Lord" in the pure, white light of His holiness that he discovered, and at once decried, a personal uncleanness: "Woe is me; I am undone; I am unclean." And that confession brought the full relief of a further revelation of the Lord as the God of cleansing.

2—LIGHT CLEANSSES. Twice the Apostle uses this word (1 John 1:7, 9) to assure us that our so great salvation not only reveals sin to us but relieves us from it. Calvary's cross that gave us "the blood of God" as the full and sufficient ground for sin's pardon also provided just as fully for sin's pollution. And as the need is continuous, so also the cleansing: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son keeps cleansing us from all sin." That

the blood should prove continuously efficacious as sin's double cure, cleansing from both its guilt and power, two conditions are to be met. Note the double "if" of cleansing: "If we walk in the light" (vs. 7), that is, "keep ourselves clear to the light" (a word Paul uses in writing to the Philippians), harboring nothing that savors of darkness, concealing nothing that Light longs to search out and put away; and again, "If we confess our sins" (vs. 9), the times and ways in which we have defiled ourselves by failure to walk in Light's perfect day. As we meet this latter condition He is "faithful and righteous" to "forgive and cleanse"—these benefits, claimed on the ground of Calvary's blood, are not a matter of mercy but rather of righteousness on God's part in carrying out the principles and provisions of the cross. Why walk in darkness, child of God's grace, when such a heaven-lit path is your privilege all the way to glory!

3—LIGHT TRANSFORMS. Cleansing is in itself a negative process. It takes from rather than adds to. It prepares for something better. 'The Abiding Life' is far more than a house swept and freed from dirt, yet empty and unbeautified. The Heavenly Guest, the indwelling Presence, having revealed the uncleanness of the heart, having responded to our cry of confession with His cleansing work, now proceeds to make over the home of our hearts in conformity to His holy tastes and desires. Is there hatred there in hiding? It is His delight to displace it with love—His love. Does He find a fondness for the world? He will turn our eyes to our blessed Lord and His loveliness. Does He sense in us

a growing carelessness toward His commandments? He will foster in us a new faithfulness. Are we in danger of being deceived by the doubts and denials, the cults and the isms of the "last time"? He is within to set us right with a divine insight and understanding. (All these are listed in chapter two of our Epistle.)

III

Light through Us

We must ever remember that the ministry of Light does not terminate in us. Light bestows its blessing *upon* us and works its work *in* us that it may accomplish its mission in the world *through* us.

1—LIGHT REFLECTS ITS SOURCE. Every sunbeam calls attention to that mighty source of exhaustless energy from whose bosom it springs. In each moment of its shining the sun is magnified. In every place that it penetrates the glories of the sun are celebrated. So our Lord, calling Himself "the Light of the world," calls us to a life in Him that we in turn may minister light to others. These are His words, defining our responsibility: "Ye are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:14, 16).

In electricity we are familiar with the function of the transformer. By it the voltage of the high tension wire—too high for man's use—is transformed, stepped down and passed on at a voltage that is safe and serviceable. Every Christian is called to be a transformer. The human eye cannot look with safety upon the sun;

even at so great a distance its glory is forbidding. So also is God. But His glory was manifested, stepped down to us, in human flesh. And when we beheld that glory He "shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ"—this, that we in turn might pass on the light, translated into terms of daily living.

Since God is love, one simple, practical test of our walking in the light is our reflecting of love in the daily relationship of life: "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" (1 John 2:9-11).

2—LIGHT OPPOSES DARKNESS. It cannot do otherwise. It does so by its very nature. Light and darkness can never make a truce. When we are called "light in the Lord" and bidden to "walk as children of light," the further exhortation is inescapable: "For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light; . . . and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:8, 11).

John, with our Lord Jesus, sees the world as a system essentially opposed to God, out of which we were bought, from which we were dissociated that we might be united to Him. He views the world as darkness, dominated by "the wicked one." To walk in the light we must not bring ourselves under its sway, but rather

reprove it. Therefore: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (John 2:15-17).

3—LIGHT RADIATES BOUNDLESS BLESSINGS. Actuated by limitless energy, with ceaseless activity the ray of light performs a ministry of blessing and benefaction beyond compute. Enfolded in its bosom are the essential qualities of its source, borne afar for the quickening and restoring of life. As we write, the latest discovered use of the light beam is to carry the mind of men in music or spoken word, much as he has formerly depended upon the electrified wire or the wireless radio. Surely the child of God has yet to realize the manifold ministry our blessed Lord waits to perform through His light in the soul of His people.

Living the Radiant Life

It should be evident that to walk in the light, as the Apostle portrays it, must result in a radiant life; a life that is marked not so much by effort to bless as by the instinctive outgoing of blessing. Such a life results from being continually energized at the Source. It is a life lived in the light of His countenance, only to let that light leap to our countenance.

Two instances grace the pages of the Old Testament,

the one illustrative of the other. They occur in Psalm 34 and Exodus 34. The Psalmist tells the experience of certain of God's people: "They looked unto Him, and were lightened." Yes, they were—lightened with His light. But more. The Revised Version renders it, "and were radiant." The light leaped to their faces, to be reflected back with a divine radiancy. It was an experience of God, plus its expression in blessing to others. Then Moses. He went up into the mount and let God talk to him. When he came down everyone knew where he had been. His face showed it. It shone. Separated *from* the world *unto* God he *walked* in the light until the light *talked* through him.

Thank God for radiant Christians, bespeaking the quiet and contentment of a divinely satisfied soul, seeing whom the world believes anew in God and hungers afresh after Him! Recently a dear friend, well up in the business world, told the writer of the remark of a mutual acquaintance. Having watched, through the years, the consistent yet joyous life of this friend, he was constrained to remark: "If — were to go wrong I would lose my faith in God and all the Christianity I possess." To him our business friend speaks of God. And why? That life, as the writer learns, is fed at the Source. Our friend loves to steal away for hours of quiet fellowship with Him. He is walking in the Light; and the life is radiant.

V

LOVING AS HE LOVED

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another"—1 John 4:11

The careful reader of our Epistle will have noted that the Apostle interweaves Love with Light, making the two inseparable, after the manner of his Gospel. His first reference to Love is a reminder of the "new commandment" as its standard of expression. Passing on to the Love section of the Epistle, where the word occurs no less than forty-six times in three brief chapters, his thought moves about three chief considerations: Love as it is in God; Love as manifested in Christ; Love as exemplified in and through His followers.

These three all emerge from the opening sentence: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God" (1 John 3:1). Behold: the amazing love of the Father; that love bestowed upon us in the person and work of the Son; resulting in our becoming the children of God, His "born ones," partakers of His nature, members of His family, set in the world to show forth the family characteristics.

I

Love at Its Source

We shall never know Love—not human affection or sentiment but love as we have it in the New Testament

—till we trace it back to its fountain-head, in the heart and nature of God. It is well for us to realize that the Greek word for New Testament “love” occurs nowhere in secular literature, and this for the simple reason that this love is known only through the revelation and experience of God Himself. In Him:

1—LOVE IS. Love has no existence apart from God, and God has no existence apart from love. Twice John affirms, “God is love.” This is saying far more than “God loves.” His loving might be occasional or intermittent. His acts might be actuated by love today, only to change tomorrow. But no! Love is His nature. He cannot deny Himself. He cannot act contrary to Himself. Just as He “is Light,” pure and absolute, so He “is Love,” unmixed and unalloyed.

2—LOVE IS IMPARTIAL. Since loving, with God, is an expression of His nature, it is independent of any consideration outside of Himself, such as the attractiveness or deservedness of its object. (This is not to say that there are no qualities in the divine nature other than love; He is always holy, and He is always just, but never to the nullifying of His love.) Hence, He is “no respecter of persons.” His gifts of love are not bestowed because of personal attraction nor withheld because of ill desert. So our Lord appeals for a life equally “without partiality,” basing His appeal upon the Father’s impartial treatment of all and the fact that we are members of His family: “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children

of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:44, 45).

3—LOVE IS IMPASSIONED. The Gospel hinges upon one little word, "so." God not merely loved: "God *so* loved the world." And John's appeal in his Epistle turns upon the same word: "If God *so* loved us." It was a love that so welled up that it could not contain itself; rather, "according to the riches of His grace . . . He hath abounded (overflowed) toward us." Our salvation is the overflow of divine love. We were dead in trespasses and sins, children of disobedience and children of wrath. That we ever ceased to be such we owe to one thing: "But God . . . for His great love wherewith He loved us" (Eph. 2:1-4). How shall we ever tell the wonders of such love to usward!

"Could we with ink the ocean fill,
Were every blade of grass a quill;
Were the whole world of parchment made,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry,
Nor would the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky."

II

Love in Christ

Christ is God, and God is Love. Jesus came to manifest the Father. John says of Him: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). Jesus says of Himself: "He that hath seen

Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). Then all that can be said of God as Love must be equally true of the Son in the days of His flesh. In Him:

1—LOVE IS SACRIFICIAL. If "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son," then the Son, in turn, must give as the case requires, coming "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." What a costly thing is it to love! God the Father paid the price of loving us. God the Son paid the price of His love for us. Having given His life *for* us, He now has the gift of eternal life to give *to* us.

2—LOVE IS KIND. Divine love has this characteristic: "God is kind" (Luke 6:35). And when that love, realized in human living, is depicted in First Corinthians thirteen, the description begins: "Love suffereth long, and is kind." It was our Lord's love that fulfilled this picture in life. How wonderful His love! How gentle under provocation; how long-suffering in the face of evil; how kind to the weak and weary and erring; how compassionate to the sinful, the sorrowing and the suffering. When will we, His followers, realize that our growth in Christ-likeness waits upon a kindness of life, out of a kindliness of spirit, that reflects His love in the heart?

3—LOVE IS UNFAILING. The description of divine love in human life concludes with the summarizing statement: "Love never faileth." This was our Lord's love, from first to last. Truly His love, rooted in the divine nature, which *is* Love, fed by continual communion with His Father, sustained at all times by the

indwelling Spirit energizing Him—such love as His never failed. With men and demons doing their worst, under the treachery of betrayal, the trial of cruel mockery, the torture of the cross, Love kept on loving. What a spectacle! The unveiling of God who is Love unfailing. If men did not believe in His deity otherwise, in contemplating the disparity between their love and His, they must say, “Truly this was the Son of God.” And we are the followers of such as He! Nay, we are partakers of His nature—which is Love.

III

Love in and through Us

At this point the Apostle lays strong claim upon the Christian for a Life of Love. It is in this respect, above all else, that he “ought himself *also* so to walk, even as He walked.” Moreover, no one but the child of God is qualified so to walk. And further, such a love-life is the world’s supreme need.

1—LOVE IS THE EVIDENCE OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE. Our Lord’s new commandment that His disciples “love one another” is by no means an arbitrary requirement. It is the natural expression of our new relationship. As the “children of God”—always the viewpoint of this Epistle—we have a common Father and are sharers alike of His life and nature. The tangible evidence of this invisible family bond is love—for who would not love his own brother? “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1 John 3:14). If the love is not there, the life is not there. The

absence of love is evidence that we are still "abiding in death." The presence of its opposite, hatred, is evidence that we are capable of murder and to be classed as such (vs. 15). Moreover, love's evidence should be sacrificial, as was His, in a laying down of life for the brethren (vs. 16), extending to the practical and the substantial, an actual meeting of our brother's need (vs. 17), a loving "not in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (vs. 18).

2—LOVE IS THE RESPONSE TO HIS LOVE. Under commandment to love one another as He loved us, is not such a standard our despair? It is not to be attained by striving after it as an external goal. Not by imitation, but by appropriation. His love is not merely, nor mostly, a standard to live by, but a reservoir to draw upon. "Herein is love," says the Apostle, "not that we loved God, but that He loved us" (1 John 4:10). Then he proceeds to trace the benefits of that redeeming love for the believer to the Abiding Life, to the fact that "God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (vs. 15). This, then, is the secret of love's experience, a fountain opened in the heart: "We know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him" (vs. 16, R. V.). What a treasure we have in such an inexhaustible supply. God is love and He has found a way of pouring Himself into our hearts by His Holy Spirit given unto us (Rom. 5:5). The genesis of love, then, is this: "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

3—LOVE IS THE TEST OF TRUE DISCIPLESHIP. The

Apostle cannot leave the matter of Love without laying heavily upon our hearts its utmost seriousness. Do we feel ourselves free to love or hate according to whim? Listen! The test is absolute and unequivocal: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen" (vs. 20)? If our love is partial it is not God's love. If it makes distinctions, loving some and hating others, it has never drunk at the fountain fed by the divine nature, which *is* love, irrespective of the object. Left thus to his own native resources, the love that does not go out to "his brother whom he hath seen" cannot rise to the height of loving "God whom he hath not seen." Yet the command is clear, and insistent, "That he who loveth God love his brother also" (vs. 21). And we are without excuse since, for the keeping of this command, He has made His own love, impartial, uniformly kind and unfailing, available to us.

"We Ought Also to Love"

As the Apostle bore down upon the disciple of Christ with the obligation to "also walk even as He walked," so likewise in the matter of love. See 1 John 3:16 and 4:11—the same wording in the Greek: "we ought also." The Gospel is not merely that "God so loved," but that His love so transforms that His children *also* love as He loved. Without that "also" in us, the world is slow to be impressed.

A Buddhist, seeking the truth, complained, "I want to believe in Christ, but I have never seen Him in those

who profess to follow Him." In China a dying man, when told the story of Jesus' love, cried with joy, "Ah! I always thought there was a God like that, somewhere." By their reflection of the love of God His children should daily evidence their Father to those who know them. The little girl who said, when asked her thought of God, "I think He is more like Jesus Christ than anyone I know," should have had a dozen friends who "also" reminded her of God because of their walking as He walked, loving as He loved.

How His love, that led Him to lay down His life for us, ought to constrain us, in these days of dire need, to lay down our lives also, as the only means whereby that need will be met. "Behold, what manner of love." Behold, until it burns its sacrificial cross into the moral and spiritual fibre of our being.

"Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

VI

LIVING IN THE SPIRIT

"Hereby we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit"—1 John 4:13, R. V.

As in a great musical production there are certain dominant strains that convey to the listener's ear the master's *motif*, yet they in turn are supported by an accompaniment that equally expresses the master's theme, so in our Epistle. Light and Love are its dominant notes, expressive of our experience of God, yet back of them is always the supporting thought of Life, without which Light and Love could not be.

The theme of the Apostle, as we have seen, is the Abiding Life, the life that is ours this side of Pentecost, the life in the Spirit. The Epistle begins by referring to the Life as manifested in Christ the Son (vv. 1, 2) and proceeds to trace that Life in its correspondent manifestation in us who, by believing upon Him, become sons and receive His Spirit. Just as, technically speaking, energy expresses itself as light and heat, so in the things of the Spirit. The life will show itself as light, rather than darkness; as love, rather than hatred. And as light and heat are impossible apart from energy, so the life is the basis, the key to all Christian experience.

Moreover, Light and Love are not the only expressions of Life. It has its own essential, inalienable attri-

butes, characteristics that must come into their own if Christian experience is to be fully rounded out and Christian service be truly Christian in quality and achievement.

I

Life at Its Source

John records the teaching of Jesus: "God is Spirit" (John 4:24), that is, Life in the absolute, in its essence, pure and unconditioned by anything outside itself.

1—IT IS ETERNAL. And when we speak of "Eternal Life" we are referring not merely to duration but to quality. Life in God does not end because it *is* unending; it has nothing in it that could cease to be. When Jesus says: "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish," He is stating the fact that salvation is the impartation of the divine nature, which is life; and that life is necessarily eternal—God has no other kind or quality of life to give. The enemy of life, death, has no power over it; there is nothing in it to "perish."

2—IT IS TRUE, to the exclusion of all error and untruth. Jesus gives to the third person of the Trinity the name, "Spirit of Truth." Wholly truth, in His very being, so foreign to the spirit of the world, that it cannot receive Him, does not see Him and does not know Him; yet to believers receiving Him, He ministers truth, leading and guiding them into it (John 14:17; 16:13). So John sets the "Spirit of Truth" over against the "spirit of error" (1 John 4:6).

3—IT IS HOLY. Holiness is an essential attribute of Life in God. It is, by nature, separate from everything

unclean. Nothing that contaminates could by any possibility touch it or fasten itself upon it. Its very essence makes it a thing apart. It is with this in view that the Apostle makes the clear-cut separation between sin and sinlessness, tracing the one to its source, "of the devil," and the other to the fact that we have been begotten with the sinless life and nature of God.

II

Life as Experienced in Us

The Life that *is* in God, and *was* manifest in the Word made flesh, now entrusts itself to us, seeking our hearts as its habitat. It goes without saying that the business of those receiving the Life is to see that, so far as possible, it is in us as it is in Him. In order that Light and Love may do their purifying, beautifying and transforming work, they must be sustained by a vital, vigorous flow of Life. In fact, it cannot be too strongly emphasized that the secret of all true Christian experience is a constant appropriating of Life from the Source. As experienced in us:

1—LIFE IS A BEGETTING. We do not grow into life. We do not struggle for it. We cannot buy it. We possess it as any child—by being born. We are begotten of God, born of the Spirit. As Jesus taught Nicodemus, this New Birth is the one and only doorway into the Kingdom.

Throughout the Epistle, some eight times, the form of address constantly used is "Little children." It is a reminder to all, young and old alike, of our New Birth.

We are the "born ones" of God; as the Scotch put it, His "bairns." This means, and it is the invariable viewpoint of this Epistle, that we are possessed of God's life and nature, members of His family. In consequence the appeal of this Epistle for Christian living is the most tender to be found anywhere—it is merely our filial duty, as the children of our Father.

2—LIFE IS AN ANOINTING. As believers we have an anointing from the Holy One (1 John 2:20), which becomes an inward, personal teaching (vs. 27), serving to fortify us against the wiles and seductions of false doctrine. In other words, the Spirit who imparted to us the life of God also endowed us with the mind of God. The result is a spirit of discernment that detects the "antichrists" that characterize this "last time" (vs. 18), people who turn aside from the truth, deny the Deity of Christ and pervert the plain way of life (vv. 19-21).

How gracious of our God, in view of the false systems of our day, to provide such an anointing as a surety against false beliefs with all their plausible seductions. "The sheep follow Him: for they know His voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." In the light of this teaching it may well be doubted whether those who are led away by the errors of one Russell, Mrs. Eddy, etc., ever were born again, else they would have the anointing that discerns the error. John reasons: "If they had been of us, they would have remained with us."

3—LIFE IS AN ASSURING. One of the most significant

words in this entire Epistle is "know." It occurs thirty-seven times. The Gospel was written that we might "have life"; the Epistle, that we might "know that we have life" (John 20:31; 1 John 5:13). Life in the Spirit is conducive to a knowledge that is more positive and immediate than mere reassuring. It goes deeper than the head; it is of the heart. This knowledge is a consciousness of truth and reality, wrought as a conviction in the soul. Just as I have an inherent consciousness, which is far more than knowledge gleaned from a birth record, that I am my father's son, so is the assurance ministered by the Spirit to those who live a life of abiding in Him.

To go through these "knows" of the Apostle of Assurance will bring rich returns in the coin of heavenly confidence. Not only do we know Him; "*we know* that we know Him." Not only have we passed from death unto life; "*we know* that we have passed from death unto life." Not only are we of the truth; "*we know* that we are of the truth." Not only does He abide in us; "*we know* that He abideth in us." Not only do we dwell (abide) in Him; "*we know* that we dwell in Him." Not only do we have eternal life; "*we know* that we have eternal life." Not only does God hear prayer; "*we know* that He hears us." Not only are we of God; "*we know* that we are of God."

III

Life as Expressed through Us

The responsibility for letting the Life find expression through us, His children, is clear and conclusive. John

reasons it thus: "Because as He is, we *also* are in this world." Note the "also"—it is the Apostle's favorite phrase for linking our living with our Lord's in inescapable responsibility. He came in the flesh, that the Life might be manifested through Him. Now He has given us His Spirit that we *also*, possessed of the same Life, may show forth its essential character. It should be equally clear, as the very *ABC* of Christian living, that the possibility of acquitting ourselves for such a high responsibility lies in freely drawing upon the Life at its Source, letting it have its unhindered way in us, then passing it on to our fellows. But how shall we give such Life its rightful expression through us?

1—LIFE IS A FELLOWSHIP FAMILYWARD. In this Epistle we find ourselves in the bosom of a family—the family of God. We are brothers each to the other. It is in this intimate association of the twice-born children of God that Christian living finds its foremost sphere of duty—people of whatever natural diversity, yea even antipathy, demonstrating their kinship in Christ, living in "fellowship one with another," loving one another with the very love of God, all the outbreathing of the indwelling Spirit. No apologetic for the Christian faith is more greatly needed today than that of a new reality in the bond of life and love among God's people. For this the world waits to be convinced.

2—LIFE IS A WITNESS WORLDWARD. In the fifth chapter of the Epistle, ten times in five verses occurs the Greek word for "witness" (obscured by variant renderings in the Authorized Version). "It is the Spirit that beareth witness." He is the great witnesser, bearing

witness through the Word concerning the Son and the way of life through Him. This witness, when we have believed it, makes our own salvation sure to us. But this witness does not terminate upon us; rather, through us who have received it is it to be given to the world.

Nor is our witness less of life than of lips. The truth of it is to be *seen* as much as *heard*. Thus the whole teaching of the Epistle, its appeal that we walk as He walked and love as He loved, is crystallized in the practical demand that the Christian live a testimonial life before the world, commending His salvation by its evident power to transform and satisfy. This furnishes one more angle of appeal, added to all that has gone before, calling the child of God to a life of separation. If the love of the world still grips his heart, leaving him unchanged both inwardly and outwardly, how can he convince that world of the worth of his faith?

3—LIFE IS A BOLDNESS GODWARD. Twice the Apostle turns to the Godward expression of our life in prayer. Both times he employs this word, "confidence" or "boldness toward God" (1 John 3:21; 5:14). Both times, also, there is an "if" conditioning our success in prayer. The ability to approach God with boldness depends upon the life that is back of the praying. It must be a life that leaves us with an uncondemning heart, conscious that its uppermost desire is to "keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight."

When we were younger in the Christian life, in our eagerness to please Him we set about to catalog His commandments with a view to keeping them, as the

key to our confidence toward Him. But in so doing we were overlooking the fact that, to save us from all bondage to legalism, in the next verse He proceeds to give the epitome of His commandments: "And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment" (1 John 3:23). Believing on the Name, than which there is none other, we have life from God and become members of the family of God. Loving one another (and "love is the fulfilling of the law") we live as members of the family. How simple it sounds! And it is. Such a life abides in Him, is well pleasing to Him, has boldness toward Him. When we maintain the line of communication, unbroken at any point, we can approach God with the confidence of children coming to their Father; and as we wait there in His presence with supreme desire that all self-willing should be set aside for His supremely perfect will, "we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (1 John 5:15). Nor does this privileged prayer-life terminate upon ourselves; it is quickly turned into the channel of intercession for others, chief of all for the members of the family of faith (vs. 16; cf. Eph. 6:18, 19).

* The Christlike Life

This is the only life that tells, for it is the only life that God can use. All that savors of the flesh, all sin and unbelief, all that partakes of darkness, all hatred or lack of love, all conformity to the Christ-refusing world—these He cannot use. But, blessed be God, He

has given us His Spirit for this very purpose, that He might free us from bondage to all such and bring us out into the liberty of the sons of God, even to a life of conformity to His own Son.

This is the life that tells. Not merely is it better to *live* for Him than to *work* for Him; it is the only way, without which we cannot work for Him. There is no substitute. It is His own life in us that He uses. This incident comes to us from the mission field: A man was about to be recalled because of apparent inability to meet certain conditions of language, etc. But his fellow-workers protested, saying, "Please do not recall him, for his life makes up for all our talking." Were we able fully to abide in Him that He might perfectly abide in us; could our lives reveal only Christ and others see "no man, save Jesus only"—such a life on the part of God's people would deliver a spiritual shock that would startle this old world out of its age-long unbelief.

VII

THE VICTORY—THREEFOLD AND THREE-TENSE

*"This is the victory that overcometh the world,
even our faith"—1 John 5:4*

The experience of Light, Love and Life, as depicted by the Apostle, beautiful in its simplicity and wholly satisfying, is not altogether easy of attainment. It has its enemies. Hence the words, "victory" and "overcome" (1 John 2:13, 14; 4:4; 5:4, 5). The Abiding Life is a life of victory. And the victory is well within our reach, since the resources are of His own providing. Nay, they are Himself: "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

I

The Threefold Enemy

A study of the above citations reveals a threefold enemy: the wicked one; the world; the self-life, that in us to which the former two direct the appeal of their blandishments. Scripture uniformly lists the three: the world, the flesh, the devil. There is no difficulty in correlating this threefold enemy with the threefold Gospel. They are actively and aggressively opposed to allegiance to God the Father; to faith in, confession of, devotion to, God the Son; to life in, and surrender to,

the Holy Spirit. They are the threefold enemy of the threefold experience of Life, Light and Love. And yet, sad to say, many confessed followers of Christ, children of grace, destined for glory, not only "fall" for their subtleties but glibly declare that they "can see no harm in them."

1—THE WICKED ONE. Himself fallen into a state of open rebellion against God, he is not content that any man should own allegiance to God. Jealous of fealty to Him he came to our first parents with a threefold temptation (Gen. 3:6). We read of nothing evil in itself that he asked them to do. His purpose was to sever the life-cord between God and man, diverting man's allegiance from God to himself. This he accomplished, as history eloquently attests. And today he is doing all possible to prevent a reunion. When, however, such a union is set up through the saving grace of God, he does all in his power to disrupt it, making his appeal through the world without and to the flesh within.

2—THE WORLD. The Greek word means world order or system. It is anything and everything that leaves God out. It is a system of thinking and living that does not count God essential. It proposes to satisfy man, intellectually, morally, spiritually, socially, economically, apart from God. In creed and conduct it is antichristian; it has its own way of believing and living.

So the Apostle, when once he has mentioned the matter of overcoming the wicked one, links with him the world system he has set up and warns God's children against it: "Love not the world, neither the things

that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 2:15-17). Note that the threefold temptation used in Eden is here ascribed to the world.

But the Apostle continues, passing from conduct to creed (vs. 18 ff). The world is "antichrist" in its attitude of denying the Deity of Christ and the Fatherhood of God, solely through Him. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (vv. 22, 23).

Soon John returns to the same subject, warning against the world's antichristian creed of unbelief and the spirits actuating it: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" (1 John 4:1-3).

If believers, through the years and particularly in our day, had taken seriously these warnings, continuing to abide in Him and in the anointing of His Spirit (1 John 2:24-27), the world could not have dictated the

denials of essential Christian truth which now stalk, unblushing and unrebuked, through the pulpits and counsels of the Church. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). Faith in whom? Jesus as the Son of God (vs. 5). It is a great conflict; the promise is: "To him that overcometh."

3—THE FLESH. What movings the self-life, with its unworthy passions and purposes, has within us. How often we have felt them, been shamed by them, realized our own impotence before them. The flesh in us is the enemy of the Spirit in us, the one "lusting" against the other. The sin of pampering the self-life is that we thereby defeat the gracious purposes of the Spirit in us, checkmating His every move to transform us into His likeness. Thus life continues on a fleshly basis, unbeautified, unsanctified. But more. It is the flesh to which the world and the wicked one make their appeal. Thus we become their easy dupes. We have paved the way for worldly creed and worldly conduct to creep into our lives, much to the satisfaction of Satan. Why does any Christian ever deny the Blood? or the Resurrection? Only through the pride and conceit of the flesh. And who are pleased by such denials? Only Satan and his world-system.

The antidote, so persistently urged by the Apostle, is the Abiding Life. As one has well said, "Detachment from the world results from attachment to Christ." As we abide in Him, the Spirit quickens His life and nature in us, we have His mind and walk in His ways. Therefore, John urgently pleads, "Abide!" "Abide!"

II

The Three-Tense Victory

The very soul of our Epistle is the victory of the Christian life—the victory of a genuine Christian experience. It is victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is victory through the Holy Spirit, in the reality of the Abiding Life. It is victory through the Father's guardian, keeping power, exercised toward His children. It is victory over every foe, within and without. It is victory over all fear. It is victory because Christ died, and because He lives. It is victory because Christ came, and because He is coming again. It is victory because God *is* Light, and Love, and Life, and because we *know* Him. It is victory for the past, for the present, and for the future, covering the whole gamut of human need and experience.

1—VICTORY FOR THE PAST. It rests in the person, worth and saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin" (1 John 3:5). It is in the fact that "our sins are forgiven us for His name's sake" (1 John 2:12). It is in the fact that "we have passed from death unto life"—and "we know" it (1 John 3:14). It is the fact that eternal life has become ours in perpetuity, with the Holy Spirit witnessing, personally, within us, what God's Word has witnessed to us: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning His Son. And the witness

is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life" (1 John 5:10-12, R. V.).

2—VICTORY FOR THE FUTURE. It rests in the fact that Christ is going to "appear a second time," for our complete, perfect and final salvation. "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is. And every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:2, 3, R. V.). In that coming for His own we will be brought into His immediate presence—wondrous privilege for one-time sinners, "without God and without hope in the world"—since "we shall see Him as He is." The sight will be transforming, beyond all that we have here experienced: "We shall be like Him." That likeness is to extend even to our body which, in His coming, He will transform "that it may be conformed to the body of His glory." It will bring to full accomplishment His predestinating purpose in us, namely, that we should be "conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." What a prospect! No wonder that such a "hope" has the practical effect of personal purity, even at this present time. To fail to entertain this hope is to lose part of our God-given victory.

3—VICTORY FOR THE PRESENT. We consider this last because it is the chief concern of the Epistle. The past and future aspects of victory are viewed as making the

present possible and real. It rests in the fact of the Holy Spirit's abiding presence in the believer, with the correspondent presence of Christ the Victor above. It is the Abiding Life, lived out in a continuously satisfying experience of His sustaining power, that power brought to bear upon every phase of life's present problems.

It is victory over sin. Not in saying we have no sin—as though we had this victory in ourselves, independent of Him; not that, but rather in so living and walking that we continually appropriate the victory of Calvary. It is the continuous cleansing of the Blood (1 John 1:7), claimed through our conscious and confessed need of it (vv. 8-10).

But the provision goes further than this. Christ not only died; He lives, and is now our "Advocate with the Father." (The same Greek word, translated "Comforter," as is applied to the Holy Spirit here with us.) He is our Lawyer, pleading our case. And His plea is Himself—the fact that He is Jesus Christ "the righteous" and that we are in Him (1 John 2:1, 2). Through His advocacy any temporary lapse is turned to victory without being suffered to settle in blight upon the soul or becloud its spiritual horizon. He is our propitiation and our righteousness; in Him and through Him we are as though we had never sinned.

It is victory that is continuously ministered and assured by His presence indwelling us. Says the Apostle: "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). This is the keynote of the Epistle. It is the key of victorious living. As we

abide in Him and He in us we need not fall into sin; darkness does not enshroud us—we walk in the light; disobedience does not beguile us—we keep His commandments; worldliness does not bewitch us—we desire to do His will; false doctrine does not mislead us—we know the true teaching; hatred does not seize upon us—we love one another with His love; our love does not run to mere words—we are willing to pay the price of genuine love expressed in deeds of kindness and helpfulness; we are not the easy prey of the wicked one's wiles—we “keep ourselves,” as God's children, that he touch us not.

III

The Threefold Means of Victory

It becomes evident that the secret of victory is simply the Abiding Life. As we abide we put ourselves in the way of appropriating every provision He has made for a life of victory. Were we able perfectly to abide in Him, our life would approximate His life. Could our life be wholly and solely the expression of His life in us, we would not sin.

These considerations point to the fact that the practical realization of a truly Christian life waits upon our practice of the presence of God—anything that makes the bond of union between us and Him vital, that renders Him a transforming force in daily experience.

God has appointed certain specific means that minister spiritual health, that make for reality in the Abiding Life—means so essential as to preclude the possibility of success if ignored or neglected. These means are

threefold, as mentioned by our Apostle: the Word of God, abiding in us; an emboldened prayer-life; a keeping of His Word in a worthy, obedient walk.

1—THE WORD OF GOD. This is the means mentioned in the first section (1 John 2:14). It is His means for ministering Light to us: "The entrance of Thy Word giveth light." And what a means it is to this end. God has promised that it shall not return unto Him void, empty, fruitless (Isa. 55:10, 11). It is declared to be "living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

Does anyone desire a life freed from the thralldom of sin, the simple means are at hand in a faithful following of the Psalmist's example: "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Ps. 119:11). Do we weary of bearing the impress of the world in our plastic, fleshly nature? Here is God's way out: "But we all"—the common privilege of Christians as compared with the one experience of Moses—"with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18, R. V.). Moses let God talk to him, and his face shone. With the Bible in hand, the mirror for seeing His face, whensoever we will we may have a like experience of its transforming power, making us over into the likeness of His glory. Saints in all the ages, having recourse to His Word, have proved its

strangely quickening, sustaining, glorifying power. To root out sin and self, to make us over into the likeness of our Lord, it must be given its day-by-day play upon the believer's heart. Its neglect is suicidal and fatal to the spiritual life.

2—THE PRAYER-LIFE. This is the means mentioned in the second or Love section (3:21, 22; 5:14, 15). Prayer is not merely, nor chiefly, getting things from God—although it is that. Prayer is God's provision for drawing out the love of His children toward Himself. He bids them come boldly. As they thus come, the heart-life is laid bare before Him. He has opportunity to search it, lift it to a higher level, make it altogether pleasing to Himself, then turn it into channels of self-sacrificing love to fellow-men. No Christian loves deeply, worthily, unselfishly, who is neglecting the prayer-life.

Prayer, while conditioned upon the Abiding Life, has a gloriously quickening effect upon that life. As our Lord prayed, in the mount, He was transformed; out from His whole being, suffusing the veil of flesh, shone the life divine. Something of that same takes place in the soul and shines out through the face, whenever we have truly prayed. It slays the self-life; it quickens the spirit-life; it gives the love of God free rein over the heart-life. We need a new evaluation of prayer for its incomparable work within our own being, for the contribution it makes to the Abiding Life, in the constant, transforming communion of Father and child.

3—THE LIFE OF OBEDIENCE. This is the practical means pervading the entire Epistle, just as the theme

of Life pervades all its pages. We are so to live that we "keep His commandments," "keep His Word," "do those things that are pleasing in His sight." It is the Life lived out. No man has truth beyond what He is able and willing to prove in daily living. The life that abides in Him is the life that lives, not only in communion with Him but in conformity to Him.

So the focal point of Christian doctrine is the appeal for a life that makes practical proof of it: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

If we would know the reality of the Abiding Life, let us draw a circle, defining the bounds of Christian living, into which we deliberately step, there to find fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ, delighting ourselves in the things that He and we have in common, letting Him search out the things in us that are foreign to our fellowship, that they may be put away, rejoicing in all that the circle includes "In Him," renouncing without reserve all that the circle excludes as not in Him.

"Keep Yourselves from Idols"

With these words our Epistle concludes. What a climax! How succinctly they state the *sine qua non* of success in spiritual things. An idol is anything that claims a supreme place in our lives, anything that dis-

places God, anything that seeks to be a substitute for God. The covetous man is an idolater (Eph. 5:5); he is letting money, possessions, *things*, take the place of God. The ambitious business man, the devotee of pleasure, the one whose life centers wholly in some dear one—all such are in the danger zone of idolatry.

The Abiding Life is the very opposite. It keeps Christ central. It makes Him its center, sphere, and circumference. It says with the Psalmist: "I have set the Lord always before me." It lets Him fill and satisfy the soul, saying, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

Discipleship must ever subject itself to the Lord's searching of its aims and purposes. As He turned to His first followers, saying, "What seek ye?" (John 1:38), so would He search us today.

What Seek Ye?

What seek ye? Earth's glory, or favor, or pleasure,
 The things which attract by their glitter and show,
 The worlding's power, his ease or his treasure,
 Which th' god of this world can most fully bestow?
 The many are seeking the things which will perish,
 And few care for those which will not pass away.
 My friend, let me earnestly ask you the question—
 What is your ambition, what seek ye today?

What seek ye? The Saviour is beckoning onward,
 He offers a kingdom, a crown, and a throne;
 But th' way to attain them lies often through sorrow,
 While th' cross and th' path to be trod are His own—
 Are you willing to follow wherever He leadeth?
 Do you seek but the things which His favor can give,
 If so, you will find at the end of the journey
 That by dying to self, you most truly do live.

What seek ye? To dwell with the King for His pleasure,
To follow His precepts, to do but His will;
To seek His approval, His smile, and His favor,
And then to wait on Him obedient and still?
If so, you may not gain the world's commendation,
But His peace and His blessing are richer, my friend;
E'en now in this life you may taste His abundance,
Then yonder the glory that knoweth no end.

Two paths are before you, which one will you follow?
The one which leads upward to treasures on high,
Or the one which looks pleasant, alluring, attractive,
But leads to the things which must perish and die?
Two paths lie before you, and you have the choosing—
Oh, pause and consider, choose wisely, I pray!
The things of eternity claim your attention;
All others are fleeting—what seek ye to-day?

—A. E. R.

~~JUN 5 '44~~
~~MAY 4 '46~~
~~MAY 18 '47~~
~~DEC 7 '53~~
~~MAY 18 '53~~
~~MAY 17 '53~~
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